

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

**Meeting to be held in the Civic Centre (Council Chamber) on Thursday
9th September, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.**

Membership

Cllrs Crosby, Dodds, Dunn, P.W.L. Gibson, S. Johnston, Mason-Gage, McKeith (Vice-Chairman), Noble, Samuels, Scanlan, P. Smith (Chairman) and Tye

Coopted Members – Mrs. A. Blakey and Ms. J. Graham

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E. WAUGH,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance,
Civic Centre,
SUNDERLAND.

1st September, 2021

Item 2

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY 10th JUNE, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Dodds, Dunn, P.W.L. Gibson, S. Johnston, Mason-Gage, McKeith, Noble, Samuels, Scanlan and Tye.

Also in attendance:-

Mr Martin Birch, Director of Children's Social Care, Together for Children
Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive, Together for Children
Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate
Mr Luke Hall, Sunderland Youth Parliament
Mr David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Ms Anne Blakey and Ms Jackie Graham.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 26th April, 2021

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 26th April, 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Ofsted Focused Letter to Children's Services

The Chief Executive of Together for Children submitted a report (copy circulated) on the outcome of Ofsted's focused visit to Children's Services in Sunderland undertaken on 24 and 25 March 2021, and which presented the Ofsted letter summarising the findings of the visit published on 11 May 2021, a copy of which was appended to the report for information.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive of Together for Children, provided the Committee with an overview of the visit, placing it in the context of the impact of Covid-19, and introduced Mr Martin Birch, Director of Children's Social Care, who briefed the Committee on the key aspects of the letter both positive and less positive.

Members were advised that TfC were overwhelmingly pleased with the Ofsted letter and the fact it made no recommendations for action. Its recognition that TfC had continued to provide face-to-face services throughout the pandemic in order to support the most vulnerable children in the city was a massive pat on the back, as in the majority of other local authorities, children's social work had been undertaken remotely. Most Children's protection work was described as strong, staff enthusiasm and positivity was noted despite the personal and professional pressures they had experienced as a result of the pandemic. TfC's proactive work with schools during the pandemic was recognised along with the range of actions taken to better protect children and promote their attendance. The screening of referrals of children received from the public and other agencies by the Integrated Contact and Referral Team was described as thorough and most triaging was timely, with clear management oversight. The children at highest risk were responded to highly effectively.

With regard to the less positive aspects, Mr Birch informed the Committee that the observation with regard to the sometimes slowness of decisions made in respect of lower risk referrals was not a huge criticism. The letter described decision-making in relation to whether assessments were needed as inconsistent with some assessments being undertaken unnecessarily and also that the quality of assessments was inconsistent. Mr Birch advised that he would rather that too many assessments were undertaken than too few, however the matter of inconsistency was fair comment and it was an issue he was looking to address.

The letter also described that while decisions to bring children into care were appropriate, some decisions were made in an emergency and were not timely enough or planned effectively enough to respond to the known escalating risks while children remain at home. Ofsted contended that several of the children whose cases inspectors reviewed would have benefited from being taken into care sooner. Mr Birch advised that decisions of this nature were always balanced on a knife edge and the cases to which Ofsted were referring were usually the result of attempts made to keep families together.

The Chair thanked Ms Colbert and Mr Birch for their report and invited questions from Members.

Councillor Crosby referred to the Ofsted comments on page 10 of the agenda regarding the mental health support for Cared for Children and asked if Ms Colbert could expand upon them. Ms Colbert advised that an important distinction needed to be made between the responsibilities of TfC and services commissioned through the CCG. TfC and the CCG were working together on service improvement and a children and young people's mental health service redesign project was underway to develop a model for commissioned children and young people's mental health services in Sunderland. Ofsted were referring to cared for children and TfC would pay for additional psychological support as appropriate.

Councillor P.W.L Gibson welcomed the report. He referred to the Ofsted comment that 'the letters before proceedings were not sufficiently explicit about what the expectation is of parents and in what timescale.' He asked if new guidelines or proforma letters would be issued. What regard to the timeliness of decisions he asked what moves would be made to improve this, as prevention was better than cure, and in addition he asked if more resources would be devoted to reduce the number of NEETs.

In relation to the letters before proceedings, Ms Colbert advised they were out of necessity very long and detailed however efforts were being undertaken address this and devise templates that were more user friendly. Mr Birch confirmed that the letter was being looked at as part of the 'signs of safety' approach which encompassed the whole gamut of TfC's engagement with families. With regard to NEETs, Ms Colbert stated that it was important to make a distinction between all NEETs and those who were cared for. In the context of the region Sunderland had achieved a remarkable improvement in its numbers. There was still work to do with regard to the level of NEETs within the older young persons' age group, however it was much more difficult to drive improvements within this cohort. With regard to additional resources, Ms Colbert advised that no extra funding had been made available in respect of education and literacy despite the basic skills level in Sunderland being below the regional average.

With regard to the timeliness of assessments, Mr Birch advised that the visit had coincided with a particular spike in referrals at the front door and the extra work load had impacted on quality.

Councillor Tye stated that he broadly welcomed the letter. It was clear that improvements were being made and there was a good rational progression. It was also very pleasing that TfC's partners recognised and acknowledged this. The one aspect that he felt was confusing was Ofsted's comment regarding TfC's slowness over decisions to take a child into care, given that Sunderland had been criticised in a previous Letter for doing exactly the opposite. He believed that the key Ofsted comment in relation to the matter was that - "Decisions to bring children into care are appropriate." In conclusion he referred to the comment on the last page of the letter that - "too many children who enter care in an emergency, move quickly and not always to a settled placement." He believed this left TfC somewhere between a rock and a hard place.

Mr Birch confirmed that with regard to placements, TfC were in a difficult position. Accommodation could be expensive and sometimes didn't provide a good level of service. On occasion TfC were forced to look at a short term fit in order to search for a better solution for the long term.

Councillor S. Johnston congratulated Ms Colbert and Mr Birch on the positive progress being made. He referred to the fact that NEETs accounted for 5% of the wider population but asked for the percentage in relation to care leavers and what was being done to try and reduce the figure. Ms Colbert advised that she did not have the most recent data to hand in respect of those leaving care. The age banding of this category extended to 25 years of age. TfC was grateful for the support provided by the Esh Group in awarding apprenticeships for care leavers within its construction business but a lot of additional support was required. There

was a saying 'that it takes a village to raise a child' and it was something that TfC could not do alone.

Councillor Dunn echoed the positive comments of Members regarding the tone of the letter but sought clarification regarding the comment that "although managerial oversight is improving, it remains too variable" Mr Birch replied that day to day management was felt by Ofsted to be good and this was a term that Ofsted did not use lightly. The specific reference related to an inconsistent approach to auditing activity by the social work managers. To try and rectify this position, TfC had moved to the use of peer group audits to improve managerial oversight.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Samuels, Ms Colbert confirmed that there was nothing in the letter that had come as a surprise as TfC had submitted its own self-assessment prior to the visit which had highlighted potential areas for improvement. Councillor Samuels referred to care leavers in the 19 to 25 year group who lived outside the City and asked about the ability of TfC to engage with them. Ms Colbert and Mr Birch advised that the greater the distance, the more difficult it was to offer help. It was also the case that this was the most difficult cohort to engage with. TfC would continue to seek to engage the young person and would remain in contact with their local authority but ultimately the young person would often cease to engage.

Councillor Noble welcomed the Letter and paid tribute to the work undertaken by Ms Colbert and her Team at TfC. The fact that the Letter contained no recommendations for action was extremely good. In particular Councillor Noble paid tribute to, and thanked the staff on the ground for their sterling work during the pandemic. She questioned whether the number of Sunderland's young people who were cared for outside of the City was an indication that Sunderland had a lack of provision. She also highlighted the need to publicise the new kick start scheme to employers. The Letter had outlined a lot of positives and it was also important to note that some of the problems were ones that did not fall at the door of TfC.

Councillor McKeith stated that he had been impressed with the proactive nature of the work undertaken by TfC with schools during the pandemic. He highlighted the range of actions taken to better protect children and promote their attendance, including developing a joint risk assessment to identify and better monitor and support vulnerable children. He asked if there were other examples of this partnership work. Mr Birch advised that other examples included the operation of the virtual school. Sunderland were very lucky to have a fantastic schools liaison officer to facilitate much of this partnership work. Meetings with Head Teachers were held on a regular basis and the conversation now was a very open one.

There being no further questions for Ms Colbert and Mr Birch, the Chair thanked them for their report and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Corporate Parenting Review

The Director of Children's Services presented a report (copy circulated) which at the request of the Chair, provided for the Committee's information, a copy of a report

considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 23rd March, 2021 on the outcome of an external review into the Council's corporate parenting arrangements together with proposals for a number of changes to the Council's approach on the matter.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Birch presented the report confirming that its recommendations had been approved by Cabinet and that work had already started in putting the new model together. Young people had been instrumental in the service development and especially with regard to the 'Change the Language' Campaign'.

The Chair referred to Recommendation 10 of the Review, namely, 'Each elected member has responsibility for leading a theme from the Corporate Parenting Strategy and works with a representative from the Change Council, Together for Children and a lead Executive Director to promote the theme.' She noted that similar recommendations had been made in the past about other issues which had ultimately fallen short because of difficulties in finding time for already busy people to meet.

In addition, the Chair welcomed Recommendation 14 under which the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board would be shared with the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee and that the Board would provide it with a report regarding its work, identifying key issues for cared for children every six months. It was intended that this would provide greater oversight and challenge.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chair thanked Mr Birch for his report, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Annual Work Programme 2021/22

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed members on the developed of the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2021/22 and requested that consideration be given to the holding of a working group session in order to further develop the Committees work programme for the year

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised that provisional arrangements had been made to hold the working group session on Thursday 17th June at 5.30pm via Microsoft Teams.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items on

the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from the 17th May, 2021.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Committee was advised that if Members had any issues to raise or required further detail on any of the items included in the notice, they should contact Mr Diamond, Scrutiny Officer for initial assistance.

Members, as indicated, sought further information in respect of the following items:-

i) Item 210504/584 - To seek approval for the revised Sunderland Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. (Cllr P. Smith, Chair)

ii) Item 210513/595 - To seek approval for the annual procurement process by which funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will be awarded to providers for the delivery of Family, Adult and Community Learning (FACL) training courses in the academic year 2021/2022. (Cllr Crosby)

There being no further questions or comments, it was :-

5. RESOLVED that the Notices of Key Decisions be received and noted.

There being no further items of business, the Chair closed the meeting having thanked members and officers for their attendance and contributions.

(Signed) P. SMITH,
Chairman.

CHILDREN EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S CARE SERVICES - FEEDBACK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To report on the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of children's care services in Sunderland.

2. Background

- 2.1 Between 28 June and 9 July 2021, Ofsted undertook a full inspection of children's care services in Sunderland.
- 2.2 The Ofsted letter setting out the inspection findings of the visit was published on 20 August 2021. A copy of the letter is attached for information.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Jill Colbert (Director of Children's Services) will be in attendance to report on the feedback.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider and comment on the report.

5 Background Papers

Ofsted Inspection Letter regarding Children's Care Services in Sunderland (20 August 2021)

Sunderland City Council

Inspection of children's social care services

Inspection dates: 28 June 2021 to 9 July 2021

Lead inspector: Neil Penswick
Her Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

Children's services in Sunderland are outstanding. The city council has a highly robust oversight of its statutory children's services which are delegated to Together for Children (TfC) to be delivered on the council's behalf. Inspectors found these services to be of a very high quality and making a real difference to children's lives. Senior leaders and members of the council have demonstrated an unstinting commitment to improving children's outcomes with sustained and significant investment in children's services. Children and families benefit from highly successful early help initiatives and significantly improved and enhanced help and protection services. A small number of assessment plans and managerial supervisions could be further improved to be consistently of a high standard in all of the teams. The quality of services for cared for children and for care experienced children is consistently of a high quality.

This highly impressive improvement has incrementally been achieved from the previous Ofsted inspection in 2015 when all aspects of children's services were judged to be inadequate. At the Ofsted 2018 inspection, solid improvements were

judged to have been made for children in care, children with a plan for adoption and care leavers. However, there had not been sufficient progress made for children who needed help and protection. Since then, Ofsted visits have continued to find improvements in Sunderland children's services, including further building on the progress evident in key areas at the focused visit in March 2021. This strong focus on continued improvement is even more impressive given that it was during a global pandemic, which is still having a profound impact on the communities in Sunderland, and on the workforce of the council and of TfC.

Apart from a short period at the beginning of the first lockdown, senior managers provided their full range of services whilst continuing to work ceaselessly on making further improvements. Highly skilled, permanent workers and managers have been recruited. Staff receive high-quality training and support. A nationally recognised model of social work has been implemented and is embedding. Senior managers are delivering significant cultural change focused on putting children and their voices central to all their work. Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the quality of practice through strong management oversight and through a vastly improved integrated children's database of information, quality assurance and performance management systems. At every level of the organisation, relationship-based social work is at the centre of the strategic and operational improvements to children's services.

Inspectors met children and young people from several different groups who were supporting the improvement journey. All reported powerfully how they felt central to the changes made in Sunderland children's services.

What needs to improve

- The consistency of the quality of assessments, plans and managerial oversight.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: Good

1. Services for children who need help and protection have continued to improve and are now solidly good. The response by Sunderland Children's services to concerns is robust and ensures that risk is identified in a timely way and responded to well. The use of the chosen model of practice has transformed social workers' approach to working with families, and their support networks, to better support children. As a result, most children get the right level of help and protection when they need it and their outcomes have significantly improved.
2. Early help provision is comprehensive and well embedded. It is making a real difference to children's and families' lives. Since the last judgement inspection, early help has developed into an innovative multi-agency service able to meet an increasingly complex level of need to prevent the escalation

of cases to statutory services. Children benefit from a well-coordinated array of services that provide help when needs first arise. The vast majority of children and families get the appropriate level of help and support at the right time delivered by skilled professionals, which makes a difference to their day-to-day lives. Children who met inspectors also reported very positively that early help participation groups had helped them develop new friendships, confidence and strategies for managing their feelings.

3. Thresholds between early help and social care are well understood by all the agencies and are appropriately applied. As a result, children are receiving the right level of intervention and in a timely way. The Integrated Contact and Referral Team provides a proportionate response to contacts and referrals through consideration of the history, the current situation and an appropriate level of checks with partners, to inform decision-making. The quality of this work is now consistently good, which is an evident improvement from the last Ofsted visit.
4. The analysis of risk is detailed and recommendations are clear, which enable families to be directed to the right service. When issues are identified that need either further evaluation or support from children's social care, timely social work actions through child in need or child protection assessments are undertaken. Out-of-hours emergency social work services are responsive to risk for children living with families, cared for and care experienced children. Communication with day services and other agencies is comprehensive.
5. Child protection enquiries are thorough with a clear rationale for next steps leading to appropriate responses to child protection concerns. Strategy discussions are well attended by relevant professionals who share detailed information that enables a well-informed discussion of current risk. The outcomes to be achieved are clear, and robust action plans ensure that children are not left in situations of unaddressed risk. When there are concerns about risk from professionals who work with children, there is a robust process and oversight by the designated officer, which ensures that children are well protected.
6. The majority of assessments are comprehensive and analytical. This is a significant improvement from the previous inspections and visits. The use of the chosen model of social work provides a good framework for multi-agency consideration of risk and need. Plans are thorough, updated frequently and reflect the child's experiences. New information results in re-evaluations of findings, with a range of support services provided promptly, helping parents to achieve and sustain the requisite changes. However, inspectors did see a small number of assessments which were more superficial and did not sufficiently consider the direct experiences of the children.
7. Exemplary work by the pre-birth team is highly effective in helping and protecting vulnerable children either to remain safely in the care of their

parents or to achieve permanence with extended family or by adoption. Pre-birth assessments are comprehensive and thoughtfully reflect on parental risks and, through their interventions, identify a clear family network to establish safety for the baby.

8. An area of strength is workers' persistence in developing relationships, which becomes the means for positive change for children and families. Strenuous efforts have been made throughout the pandemic to visit children face to face. Social workers know children and their families well. TfC staff are increasingly using tools from the chosen model of practice to work with parents and children. These are having a powerful impact on helping parents to understand what life is like for their children living with issues such as parental mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse. Other focused, purposeful direct work is done at the child's pace, helping children to understand what is happening.
9. When risks increase, there is timely escalation to child protection planning. Social workers' reports to initial and review conferences clearly detail strengths, areas of concern, progress made and ongoing support needs. The analysis is concise and provides the information for professionals to make an informed decision. As a result, children are not subject to 'higher level' processes longer than is required.
10. Strong and effective partnership working helps to better protect children from harm. Multi-agency core groups are held regularly and are used well to measure progress and update the child protection plans. Staff spoke to inspectors positively about how the approach to risk management embedded in the social work model is helping parents, children and family network members understand the concerns. The vast majority of child in need and child protection plans are of a high quality, providing clarity about what needs to happen linked to the child's timeframe for change.
11. Managerial oversight has demonstrably improved with clear manager oversight at all levels, including by child protection chairs, throughout a child's written records. In a very small number of cases, the quality and effectiveness of supervision is still inconsistent and not progressing plans effectively.
12. When risks continue to escalate, pre-proceedings are swiftly issued. Substantial work is undertaken to support some of the most vulnerable families to prevent the need for care proceedings. This is having a positive effect of enhancing parenting ability, reducing levels of risk and improving the welfare and outcomes for children. Decisions to remove children from parental care are proportionate and based on an assessment of the harm they are experiencing or likely to experience. Managers have continued to improve the quality of letters before proceedings. The more recent letters are more explicit on the expectations of parents. Although having improved since the

last Ofsted visit, a small number of children had recently come into care in a crisis where inspectors identified that earlier and more robust intervention may have prevented this occurring. This was mainly due to the previous poor practice in Sunderland.

13. There is a robust response for children and young people when they are at risk of exploitation. The oversight provided by the missing, slavery, exploited and trafficked operational group provides added value in the level of scrutiny and challenge it brings to practice. As a result, the group is able to facilitate a joined-up approach from a wide range of agencies such as different police teams, social care, and housing. These meetings also ensure that disruption activities are targeted to the right community or person based on shared intelligence. There is good follow-up when children go missing from home or care. There is robust tracking of those children who are missing education with effective work with other partners, including the benefits agency and child missing education leads in other local authorities. There are similarly robust procedures for children who are electively home educated, effectively evaluating and responding to risk.
14. Young people aged 16 to 17 who are homeless are well supported by the Next Steps team. Young people are appropriately assessed and, when needed, offered support through being in care. A housing worker in the team supports the social workers and has access to a good range of accommodation for these vulnerable young people.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: Outstanding

15. Tenacious staff work tirelessly to ensure that children are at the centre of all work and interventions. Staff are strong advocates for their children. As a result, children's needs are being addressed proactively to a high standard. Children are very well supported to deal with early trauma. Significant improvements in permanence planning mean that the vast majority of children remain in stable homes that meet their needs for security, emotional warmth and care. Determined professionals ensure that they remain in touch with care experienced young people. The whole service is highly aspirational for children's futures, resulting in many achieving positive outcomes.
16. High-quality and timely decisions are made to ensure that children become cared for at a time that is right for them. Permanence planning starts immediately when children enter care, whether that is a return to parents, to live within their family network or permanence away from the family. Social work evidence to court and reports to legal gateway panels are detailed, and clearly evidence concerns and rationale for decisions. This facilitates informed decision-making that promotes children's well-being and swiftly meets their needs. Senior managers maintain a strong oversight of children's progress within legal proceedings to ensure robust and timely decision-making. Positive

feedback from the judiciary and the children and family court advisory and support service supported the view that the service improvements were benefiting children and families at this critical and important time.

17. Hearing the voice of the child is an exceptional strength in Sunderland. Cared for, and care experienced, children have a voice and they are encouraged to use it. Children's voices resound within records and clearly inform future planning. A strong Change Council is promoting the needs and shaping the services for future cared for children in Sunderland. Children are seen alone and imaginative direct work and engagement with children ensures that the voice of the child is consistently evident. Cared for children are seen regularly and in line with their needs.
18. Children's health needs are very well understood and promoted by workers who know them well. There is an excellent range of services which supports children with their mental health and emotional well-being needs. The Children and Young People's Service is a proactive service available to cared for children and care experienced young people who have emotional needs and/or poor mental health. This is ensuring that they have swift access to services and no delay in their needs being addressed. Children are also appropriately referred to child and mental health services or the in-house psychologist and the specialist therapy worker who support foster families. Delays in dental checks due to the lockdowns had been evident at the last Ofsted visit, but work has been ongoing to effectively address these issues.
19. The virtual head and virtual school are extremely tenacious and ambitious advocates of cared for children, reflected in academic targets and the support to children's well-being. Leaders from the virtual school provide clear guidance and expectations to all of those working with the children. Personal education plans are ambitious. Cared for children's attendance at school has improved and there is evidence of good and improving outcomes for many young people.
20. In the past year, impressive improvement in permanence planning means that many more children live with loving carers who are meeting their needs well. For instance, in March 2020, 28 children were matched to permanent carers, while this month the figure is 141. Inspectors were very impressed at how permanence through fostering is celebrated, including children being awarded a permanence certificate reassuring them of the stability of their home.
21. There is highly effective recruitment, assessment and training of foster carers with a steady flow of prospective carers joining the fostering service. There are clear and early processes for family finding and matching to support informed decisions and identification of the right foster families for children. For some children, this has resulted in a short-term foster home becoming the child's permanent home as they have settled so quickly. The fostering service promotes a very robust therapeutic parenting approach that is underpinned

by a strong research base. Although a lack of suitable placements has resulted in moves for a very small number of children to better match them, short-term placement stability has improved over the last 12 months.

22. The importance of birth family relationships is not underestimated. Family time is promoted very well and reviewed to ensure that children can safely continue to see their birth parents where appropriate. There is robust monitoring and reviewing of cared for children who live at home with parents. Highly effective support plans are developed, usually through the child's family safety network. Excellent life story work and later life letters are completed by committed social workers who have enduring relationships with children, helping them understand their experiences.
23. Adoption is considered in a timely way, and children are matched and placed with adoptive parents at the earliest opportunity. The preparation, assessment and approval of applicants is strong. Good-quality information-sharing, training and a high level of support from adoption workers are instrumental in achieving positive adoptive homes for children. Foster to adopt is promoted. Staff are ceaseless and proactive when looking for prospective adopters for children, including children with complex needs. Special Guardianship assessments are detailed and completed well in collaboration between the fieldwork teams and the connected carers teams. Additional support needs are identified in the placements and suitable arrangements are made to reduce the risk of any placement breakdown.
24. Cared for children's reviews are regular and comprehensive and there is good evidence of tracking and monitoring of children's progress by the Independent Reviewing Officers. Inspectors saw examples of parents being enabled to contribute to planning decisions, even when the care plan is for children to be cared for away from the family home.
25. Social workers and personal advisors (PAs) spoke knowledgeably and with affection for the care experienced young people that they are supporting. Workers are tenacious at maintaining contact with them and are aspirational for them to achieve and do well. They show great warmth and pride in even the small achievements and progress that care experienced young people make.
26. As young people approach 18, their needs and vulnerabilities are clearly identified assisting in pathway planning. Inspectors saw a mixture of approaches to pathway plans, with most reflecting the voice of the child to an exceptional degree. The plans are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changing need. There is a good range of accommodation options available to young people as they approach 18 and beyond. The proportion of young people remaining in education, employment and training is improving, although it remains an ongoing challenge to maintain this in respect of those who are over 17 years old. There are now 27 care experienced young people

at university, which is a high proportion of these young people and once again reflects the ambition of TfC and the council.

27. Young people over the age of 18 are exceptionally well supported by children's services. PAs are tenacious at maintaining contact with young people and are aspirational for them to achieve and do well. The consistently high-quality work provides a range of support, including for young people with occasional needs for additional help to those with complex histories which, as a result, at times lead to concerning behaviours. Inspectors saw much sensitive relationship-based work and also examples of where the PAs have challenged the young people as would be expected from a 'good parent'. There are specialist PAs who support the young people in higher education, and an activities officer who stayed in touch with the young people during the pandemic providing activity packs, developing cooking sessions and organising drop-ins to combat the isolation experienced as a result of the pandemic.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: Outstanding

28. Leaders and managers are confident, ambitious and influential in changing the lives of local children, young people and their families including cared for children and care experienced young people. During the pandemic, Sunderland managers ensured the provision of high-quality social work support to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children. Despite the challenges of providing services at this time, they did not stand still but continued to work ceaselessly to further improve their services to better respond to children and family need.
29. In 2015, Children's services in Sunderland were judged by Ofsted to be inadequate across all the judgement areas. An Ofsted re-inspection in 2018 found that, while improvements had been made for children in care services and adoption services were judged to be good, help and protection services were still failing to sufficiently protect children. Leaders and managers had not understood or addressed the extent of the poor practice. An alternative delivery model for children's social care, namely TfC, was created to deliver children's services functions on behalf of the council. Due to the complexities involved in establishing the company, it did not start to deliver services until April 2017.
30. The current Chief Executive of TfC, who is also the statutory Director of Children's Services, commenced in their role after the last Ofsted inspection. Since the 2018 inspection, there have been four Ofsted visits to monitor progress, together with a focused visit, to provide assurance on the quality of services being provided during the pandemic. All of the Ofsted visits have provided evidence of substantial and sustained improvements in practice and in the outcomes achieved by children. An example of the excellent senior

management drive for improvement was the TfC rapid focus on addressing the issues, impacting on a small number of children, reported on at the focused visit in March 2021. As a result of this focus, inspectors could see, on this inspection, that children were benefiting from further improvements in services and, thus, achieving better outcomes.

31. The strong focused work by the highly committed Chief Executive of TfC, the Director of Social Care and the senior management team has resulted in exceptional improvements being made, over the past six years, to the quality of social work support to children and families in Sunderland. This has ensured that the vast majority of children and their families receive high-quality support.
32. On this inspection, inspectors evaluated social work practice to be of consistently high quality and relentless in significantly improving the experience of children and young people. Amongst the range of exceptional work seen by inspectors across the entirety of children's services is the highly innovative multi-agency partnership work, delivering early help services. There is excellent support to vulnerable young parents provided by the pre-birth team, and exemplary work being undertaken to recognise the importance of, and the celebration of, permanence arrangements for cared for children.
33. This highly impactful work has been facilitated by the robust support and the commitment of the Chief Executive of Sunderland City Council, the council members and staff across the council. An improvement board chaired by a highly experienced independent senior manager has also constructively and successfully challenged partner agencies to contribute to the improvements in services.
34. From the start of the Chief Executive of TfC's appointment, she has rightly insisted that there needed to be a transformation in the culture of the organisation, focusing on the quality of practice and ensuring consistently good outcomes for children and young people. As a result of her focus on continuous improvement, a new and vibrant culture is now widespread across children's services in Sunderland. This successful approach has resulted in children's voices and influence being central to assessments, planning and interventions. Staff across the council and the multi-agency partnerships are hugely focused on seeking to identify vulnerabilities and needs, providing support for children and families before problems escalate.
35. Senior managers have focused on the right things. They have been decisive in recruiting a permanent and excellent set of social workers to replace the short-term and agency staff that were previously in post. Highly skilled managers have also been recruited and then supported with well-focused training and mentoring opportunities. In addition to recruiting experienced and good practitioners, TfC has continued to support the training of caring

and skilled staff to become social workers. Ongoing post-qualification support and training has also ensured further skills and career development, which have not only benefited the service but families who are now receiving support from committed and well-informed practitioners.

36. TfC introduced a highly regarded model of social work practice and has rolled this out across all its services. This is supported by dedicated and experienced practitioners and an extensive training programme for all TfC staff and multi-agency colleagues. While senior managers acknowledge that this is a five-year programme and more needs to be done to fully embed the model, inspectors saw many examples of where the implementation of this common approach was transforming children's lives for the better.
37. Senior leaders have extensive knowledge of service and practice strengths and where improvements are needed. Quality assurance activity and auditing has significantly improved. It is now rigorous with a clear shift to focus on the impact of practice on children's lives and experiences, acknowledging where good work has resulted in successful outcomes alongside identifying what can be further improved. As a result of the quality assurance work, not only has individual social work improved but there has been clear and positive impact improving the quality of supervision, assessments, direct work and ensuring that the voices of children are heard. Consultation with families and children in auditing is a key element of this work. The feedback from those families involved further validates that their experiences are at the centre of the social work in Sunderland.
38. Performance management information is of an exceptionally high quality. Senior leaders routinely and effectively scrutinise performance information. The excellent accessible live data and summary documents also enable managers at all levels to fully comprehend the key information, to react where necessary and to make swift improvements to services.
39. Listening to children is central to all the service improvements. Inspectors met children and young people from a number of groups who were contributing to the improvement in services. They all reported on how services were much better, how they were personally benefiting from their views being heard and how their contributions were improving the lives of other children. For instance, the Sunderland Youth Council is a highly impressive and committed group of young people who dedicate their time, energy and ideas to make Sunderland a better place for children and young people to live. They have instigated meaningful campaigns around mental health, developing mental health charter mark status for schools, providing kit bags for the homeless and in improving the environment through targeted litter campaigns in the city.
40. Similarly, the Change Council is a dedicated and influential group of young people who are having an extraordinarily positive impact on the delivery of

services for children in Sunderland. They described how their intervention had brought about changes for children including the change the language campaign, training elected members, changing the referral criteria for care experienced children who become parents, and regular meetings with housing providers. They quite rightly have a great sense of pride in the recognition they receive for their achievements, which are facilitated by an organisation that is willing to learn from their views.

41. Senior leaders and elected members are aspirational corporate parents. There is a relentless focus on improving the lives and experiences of cared for children and care experienced young people. This has resulted in additional training for council members. In addition, the increased participation of children in this training and service planning has ensured a much more robust and challenging approach to ensuring good-quality services across the council. All the council's departments consider the impact of their work on children. As a result, there is a palpable sense across the council that cared for children and care experienced young people are 'our children'.
42. All of the social workers, who met inspectors, were highly complementary about working for TfC in Sunderland and describe feeling well supported by visible and approachable managers. All workers have reasonable caseloads and, as a result, across all of the TfC services, they are supported to carry out innovative and direct work with children. They receive regular supervision which, for the vast majority of time, is reflective and appropriately challenging to further improve their practice. Social workers know their children well and speak passionately and with care about them. Inspectors could see that the relationship-based social work, spoken about by all the staff and managers they met, has been integral to the improvements in the services for the most vulnerable children and their families in Sunderland. As a result, many children's lives are improving in the city.



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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Item 5

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOODS

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an overview of the statutory requirements regarding elective home education. This paper also contains information on the number of children who are home educated in Sunderland.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Committee requested information on Elective Home Education in Sunderland.
- 2.2 Elective Home Education offers families and carers the opportunity to provide education for children and young people in their care independent from Local Authority or establish school provision. The law states that the responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. Whilst education is compulsory, attending school is not.
- 2.3 Parents take on full responsibility for their child's education, including all financial responsibilities. Any funding allocated to a school will not be passed on to a parent or to the local authority, though there are exceptions for children who have an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Parents are responsible for ensuring that the education provided is full time and suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and any Special Educational Needs (SEN) they may have. Elective Home Education gives families and carers the opportunity to educate their child outside of the school system.

3 Current Legal Position

- 3.1 The legislation associated with elective home education is not a framework for the regulation of elective home education rather it is a system for identifying children and ensuring they are receiving a 'suitable' education. There is currently no national framework in place for local authorities to work to in relation to elective home education. The Education Act 1996, section 436A states that local authorities must make arrangements to identify children not receiving education.
- 3.2 Section 437 makes provision that where a child of compulsory school age is not receiving suitable education, the local authority can take action to serve notice on parents to send their child to school and ultimately obtain a school attendance order to direct or instruct the parent to send the child to school. The school attendance order will remain in force until revoked by the local authority.
- 3.3 In 2017 a private members Bill was introduced to make provision for local authorities to monitor the education, physical and emotional development of children receiving elective home education. In response to the Bill the Government published a call for evidence on issues connected with home education. Alongside the call for evidence the

government published two guidance documents, one intended for local authorities and the other for parents. The Bill was withdrawn in October 2018.

- 3.4 In April 2019, the government published updated versions of their elective home education guidance documents for parents and for local authorities. Within the guidance it states that when parents choose to home educate their children, they assume full responsibility for their children's education which includes financial responsibility and states the local authority is entitled to conclude from the absence of any response to their informal enquiries that the parents are not providing their child with a suitable education.
- 3.5 Between April 2019 to 24 June 2019 the government held a further consultation that sought views on proposed legislation to establish:
- A duty on local authorities to maintain a register of children of compulsory school age who are not registered at a state-funded or registered independent school.
 - A duty on parents to provide information to their local authority if their child is within scope of the register.
 - A duty on education settings attended by children on the register to respond to enquiries from local authorities about the education provided to individual children.
 - A duty on local authorities to provide support to home educated families if requested by such families.

The outcomes of that consultation have not yet been published and no changes to legislation have been made as a consequence at this time.

- 3.6 Sunderland City Council has held a database of children registered as receiving elective home education for over thirteen years and when families move out of the area the information is passed to their new local authority.
- 3.7 Where parents who have deregistered their child fail to respond to the informal enquiries of the Council's Attendance Manager regarding their proposed education plan, there is a clear route to escalate this nonparticipation to a formal enquiry which can ultimately lead to the issuance of a School Attendance Order. This process is also used if the education provision provided by the parent is deemed unsuitable. The escalation process used in Sunderland has been adopted by other regional local authorities.
- 3.8 The recent OFSTED inspection noted there are robust procedures for children who are electively home educated, effectively evaluating, and responding to risk.
- 3.9 Schools are required to provide information relating to the pupil on the Council's prescribed template within 10 days of the child's deregistration. This template captures information about the child and their education.
- 3.10 Schools are asked where possible to secure the reason for the parents' decision to home educate however parents are not required to provide justification to a child's previous school. Under existing legislation, parents can elect to home educate at any stage of a child's education career and take full responsibility for their education. They do not have to give a reason for their decision to home educate.

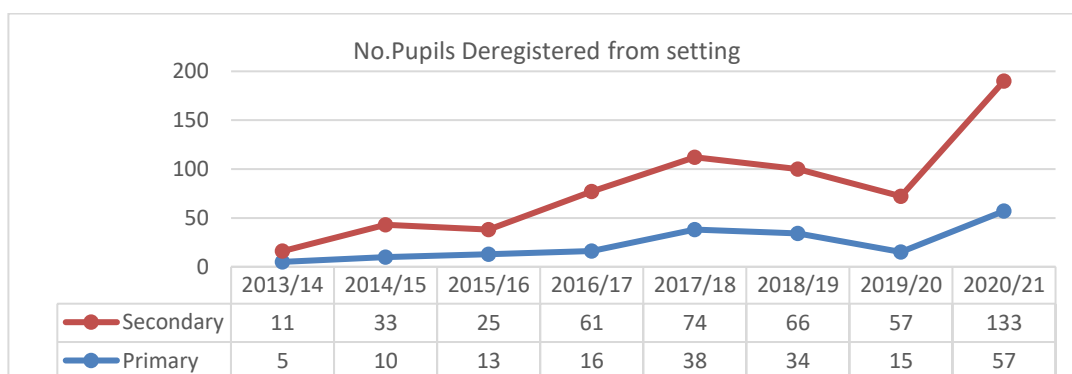
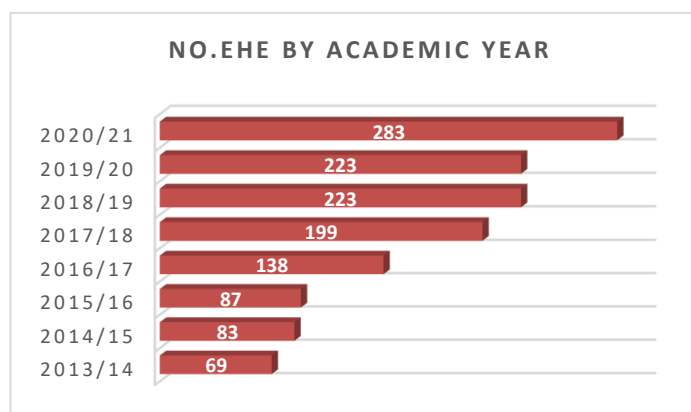
- 3.11 The Council has no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis. Nor does it have a right of entry to the family homes of children who are home educated in order to assess the education being provided.
- 3.12 Parents are under no obligation to meet with the Council to discuss the education being provided with or without their child being present.
- 3.13 Although local authorities have no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis, under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities shall intervene **if it appears** that parents are not providing a suitable education. Government guidance encourages Local Authorities to address the issue informally before serving statutory enforcement notices
- 3.14 For the majority of Sunderland families the provision of education is deemed suitable, and they continue to home educate for as long as they feel it meets the needs of their child.
- 3.15 Elective Home Education Guidelines for Local Authorities states the welfare and protection of all children; both those who attend school and those who are educated at home are of paramount concern and the responsibility of the whole community'.
- 3.16 The Council's statutory abilities to insist on seeing a child to enquire about their welfare does not extend to questioning children for the purpose of establishing whether they are receiving a suitable education
- 3.17 If any child protection concerns come to light in the course of engagement with Elective Home Educating families these concerns would immediately be referred to the appropriate authorities' using the established protocols.
- 3.18 The Department for Education (DfE) has recently created a blog to ensure parents understand the difference between home schooling and Elective Home Education. In May 2021 Local Authorities were asked to share an open letter from the DfE with Elective Home Educating parents. The letter outlined the significant increase in Elective Home Education with the most common reason for this national increase cited relating to Covid-19. The DfE letter encouraged parents to consider readmission and suggested parents discussed their concerns with the Local Authority and school.

4 **Elective Home Education Data as of 31/08/2021**

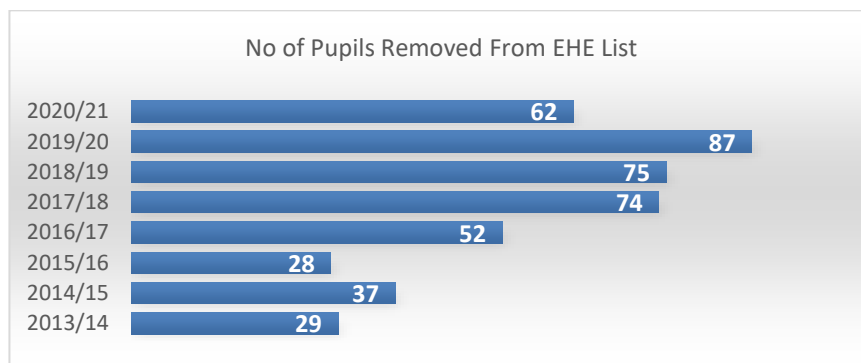
- 4.1 The DfE does not collect data relating to elective home education, however, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) has been collecting information from local authorities since 2016. The ADCS data collection was the first comprehensive national survey in recognition that the definitive numbers of home educated children across England and Wales are not known.
- 4.2 This current year's survey, based on the data from first census day 1st October 2020, reported there, are 75,668 children nationally who are electively home educated an increase of 38% on census day in 2019.
- 4.3 It is estimated 19,510 became electively home educated nationally after September 2020, this represents approximately 25% been educated on 1st October 2020 and it estimated that the total cumulative number being home educated nationally was

86,335, this represents 10% increase since 2018/19 academic year, despite school being closed for most pupils from 23rd March 2020.

- 4.4 Feedback from the survey indicated that parents consider Health Concerns relating to COVID-19 as a primary factor for deregistering children from a school roll, however some parents noted their positive experience of educating their children during partial school closures was a contributory factor. Feedback given by parents in Sunderland is consistent with the national data.
- 4.5 Although Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the number of parents intend to on enrolling their children back in school once their concerns over the virus are alleviated this is again consistent with feedback from Sunderland based parents and carers, where some parents have already re-registered their children in school.
- 4.6 It should be noted prior to the school closures associated with the Covid-19 outbreak, the national home educated population was growing by approximately 20% each year for the past five years as previous ADCS elective home education surveys have shown.
- 4.7 The data in Sunderland, as in other Councils, may not demonstrate the full number of children home educated as children whose parents have never applied for a school place may not be known to the Council.
- 4.8 The number of pupils in Sunderland who are educated at home is rising and this mirrors the national trend. However, as a proportion of the total population of pupils in the City those who are electively home educated remains low at 0.6%.



4.9 There is a high level of mobility of children who are home educated. Some may only be on the elective home educated register for a few weeks. This may be because their parents may choose to home educate short term e.g., whilst waiting for a place to become available at a preferred school; alternatively, this may be because the parent has failed to respond to informal requests made by the Council and following discussions with the Council the parent has returned the child to school, or the parent is failing to educate the child.



- 4.10 Of the 203 children who are registered as being home educated as 31/07/2021 two thirds of the total number of children being home educated in the secondary school age group with the largest proportion of them are in years 10 and 11.
- 4.11 Of the cohort that is electively home educated 74 are registered as having SEN with three pupils been subject to an Education Health Care Plan
- 4.12 During 2020/21 academic year 28 children have returned to school and there are a further 10 who are currently been supported to secure a school place. 11 children have moved out of the city, and they have all have been tracked to their new address by the Children Missing in Education Officer. Thirty families are currently being investigated as they have failed to submit an education plan and are potentially at risk of statutory action.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Council has processes in place to ensure that children's parents, where we are notified that they home educating, are contacted. The scope of intervention for the Council is limited as parents have a right to educate their children at home within the current legislation from the 1996 Education Act.
- Council officers have no rights of access to the home
 - Council officers have no rights of access to the child
 - Council officers do not have the right to assess the child's ability or aptitude
 - Council officers do not have the right to monitor the quality of the education provision on a routine basis
 - Parents are under no duty to meet with Council officers
 - Parents are under no duty to give information about the education they are providing.

- 5.2 There is no easy definition of Section 7 Education Act 1996 regarding “suitable and efficient” education, in relation to Elective Home Education, as they are not defined in law, but education can be regarded as “efficient” if it achieves what it sets out to achieve and “suitable” if it prepares the child for life in modern society and enables the child to achieve his or her full potential.
- 5.3 Sunderland Council’s work with Elective Home Educating families goes beyond the statutory duties placed on local authorities.
- 5.4 The recent OFSTED report noted there were robust procedures for children who are electively home educated, effectively evaluating, and responding to risk.
- 5.5 The Council’s Attendance Manager has worked closely with further education (FE) colleges to get better outcomes for Keystage 4 home educated pupils. FE colleges can access 14-16 year old funding that enables these pupils to have access to free examinations and a variety of courses are available to participating pupils.
- 5.6 The Council’s Attendance Manager continues to work with the NHS Immunisation Team to ensure electively home educated pupils have access to the programme
- 5.7 The Local Parental Home Education group that is made up of parents from across the region has agreed to meet with members of the Public Health team to ensure parents and pupils are aware of the additional support and facilities available to them.
- 5.8 Although there is no statutory requirement for parents to engage with the Council, home educating families are contacted on an annual basis. Families vary in their willingness to engage with the Council.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to consider the information contained within this report in relation to elective home education.

Item 6

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 SEPTEMBER 2021

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT COORDINATOR

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consider issues for inclusion in the work programme of the Committee for the municipal year 2021/22.

2. Background

- 2.1 The work programme is designed to set out the key issues to be addressed by the Committee during the year and provide it with a timetable of work. The Committee itself is responsible for setting its own work programme, subject to the coordinating role of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- 2.2 To be most effective, the work programme should provide a basis and framework for the work of the Committee, while retaining sufficient flexibility to respond to any important issues that emerge during the course of the year. The work programme is therefore intended to be a working document that the Committee can develop and refer to throughout the year.
- 2.3 In order to ensure that the Committee is able to undertake all of its business and respond to emerging issues, there will be scope for additional meetings or visits not detailed in the work programme.
- 2.4 The remit of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee covers the following:-

To review and scrutinise any matter relating to the service performance and commissioning for children, young people and their families including Safeguarding and Child Protection, Family Support and Children's Social Care, Corporate Parenting, Educational Attainment and Skills, Relationship with Schools and Youth Services.

- 2.5 The work programme should reflect the remit of the Committee and the need to balance its responsibility for undertaking scrutiny, performance management and policy review (where necessary). The work programme should also reflect and be aligned to the key priorities of the Council as set out in documents such as the Sunderland Strategy and Corporate Plan.

3. Draft Work Programme 2021/22

- 3.1 On 17 September 2020, the Committee held a work programme development session to discuss the issues to be considered in the year ahead. Jill Colbert and Simon Marshall were also in attendance.
- 3.2 Reference was made to the importance of focusing on those issues of most importance. This should help the Committee to achieve more positive outcomes. It was also felt that the use of themed meetings or focusing on a particular topic should be considered where appropriate.
- 3.3 The table below provides details of the issues considered for inclusion in the work programme:-

Regular Work Programme Items	
Children Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (Monthly)	To receive the committee's work programme outlining future meetings of the committee and the items scheduled for those meetings.
28 Day Notice of Key Decisions (Monthly)	To consider the Council's 28 Day Notice of Key Decisions.
Single Item (Items to be scheduled when dates known)	
Effect of Covid on the lives and development of children and young people	To consider the impact of the Covid pandemic on the overall educational, emotional and physical well being of children and young people through the course of their development.
Effect of Welfare Inequalities on Children in Sunderland	To consider the impact of the Covid pandemic on welfare/educational inequalities in the city. What are the issues and what is the situation in the various neighbourhoods in the city. What is effect on the working poor?
Impact of Covid 19 on Child Mental and Physical Health	To assess the longer-term impact of Covid on child mental services and their physical well being
Support available to catch up on lost education during Covid	How can schools work to catch up on lost education due to the Covid pandemic? What work going on to support children from low income families?
Impact of Covid on Primary/Secondary Transition	To consider the impact of Covid on children transitioning between primary and secondary school. Has Covid had an impact attainment and readiness for the transition?
Impact of Covid on Post 16 Transition	To consider the impact of Covid on children transitioning between school and further education/work. Has Covid had an impact attainment and readiness for the transition?

Effect of the Skills and Post 18 Education Bill	To consider the implications of the Bill for skills development and training in the city
Employment/Apprenticeship Opportunities for young People	What are employers in the city doing to increase the number and quality of employment/apprenticeship opportunities? How can we lobby employers to provide more opportunities?
Provision of activities for young children	What activities are available for young children (5-8yrs)
Youth Offending	To assess whether there has been any affect levels of crime and disorder as a result of Covid 19?
Drug Use Among Young People	To consider the impact of Covid 19 on the level of drug use amongst young people and its impact on anti social behaviour in the city?
Child Exploitation and Missing Children	To receive an update on the work going on in the city to tackle this issue.
Domestic Violence	Have we seen an increase in domestic violence as a result of Covid? What the challenges we face?
Sexual Harassment in Schools	To consider the incidence and impact of sexual harassment in schools and the action being taken to tackle it.
Children's Residential Social Care	To consider the operation of the residential social care sector and action being taken to improve it
TfC Performance Report	To receive periodic performance monitoring information
Ofsted Monitoring Visits - Feedback	To consider the feedback received following an Ofsted inspection or monitoring visit.
Children's Services Complaints Report	To receive periodic report on compliments and complaints.

3.4 A draft Scrutiny Work Programme for 2021/22 is attached as **Appendix 1**.

3.5 It should be noted that the work programme is a 'living' document and can be amended throughout the course of the municipal year. Any Elected Member

can add an item of business to an agenda for consideration (Protocol 1 within the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook outlines this process).

4. Recommendations

That the Scrutiny Committee consider the feedback from the work programme session and consider the issues for inclusion in the work programme for the coming year.

5. Background Papers

None

REASON FOR INCLUSION	JUNE 21	JULY 21 (CANCELLED)	9 TH SEPT 21	7 TH OCT 21	4 TH NOV 21	2 ND DEC 21	6 TH JAN 22	3 RD FEB 22	3 RD MARCH 22	31 ST MARCH 22
Policy Framework/ Cabinet Referrals and Responses									Scrutiny Annual Report – 21/22	
Scrutiny Business	Corporate Parenting Review			Engagement and Participation with Young People – discussion with the Youth Parliament re work programme topics	Domestic Violence Update	Welfare inequalities	Impact of Covid 19 on Child Mental and Physical Health	Youth Offending and Anti Social Behaviour	Apprenticeships and Employment opportunities	
Performance / Service Improvement	Ofsted Focused visit to Childrens Services - Feedback		Ofsted Inspection Reports: Childrens Services & SEND		Together for Children – Performance Monitoring Report (Jill Colbert) Children Services Complaints				Together for Children – Performance Monitoring Report (Jill Colbert)	
Consultation / Awareness Raising	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF KEY DECISIONS

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Holding the Executive to account is one of the main functions of Scrutiny. One of the ways that this can be achieved is by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive (as outlined in the Notice of Key Decisions) and deciding whether Scrutiny can add value in advance of the decision being made. This does not negate Non-Executive Members ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.
- 2.2 To this end, the most recent version of the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions is included on the agenda of this Committee. The Notice of Key Decisions is attached marked **Appendix 1**.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 In considering the Notice of Key Decisions, Members are asked to consider only those issues where the Scrutiny Committee or relevant Scrutiny Panel could make a contribution which would add value prior to the decision being taken.
- 3.2 In the event of Members having any queries that cannot be dealt with directly in the meeting, a response will be sought from the relevant Directorate.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To consider the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Agenda
-

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Notice is given of the following proposed Key Decisions (whether proposed to be taken in public or in private) and of Executive Decisions including key decisions) intended to be considered in a private meeting:-

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
210118/552	To consider the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order in relation to the New Wear Footbridge.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210419/577	To approve the dilapidation settlement figure and the procurement of the dilapidation works in respect of the CESAM building.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
210510/588	To approve the receipt of external funding for the public sector decarbonisation scheme and green homes grant local programme and the procurement of the necessary contractors to deliver the schemes.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210420/579	To consider a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210505/586	To approve the procurement of Rock Armour for the coastal defence structures at Stonehill Wall and Hendon Foreshore Barrier, Port of Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210528/601	To consider the establishment of a Bus Enhanced Partnership.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210602/603	To commence the procurement process and subsequently award the necessary contract for a concession contract for the installation, maintenance, and management of advertising for Large Digital Media Advertising (LDMA) Screens in the City.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
170927/212	To approve in principle the establishment of a new police led Road Safety Partnership (Northumbria Road Safety Partnership) embracing the Northumbria Force Area.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 September to 30 November 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
200813/494	To approve funding mechanisms for the acquisition of residential properties.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210621/609	To consider the selection of a Preferred Bidder in respect of the procurement of a JV partner for the Council's 5G Smart City project and approval of the proposed next steps, including contract award	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210706/611	To extend the current E-Scooter Trial until the end of March 2022	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210709/612	To authorise the Executive Director of City Development to deliver the Washington F-Pit Museum Heritage Visitor Centre and Albany Park Improvement project, including to procuring of consultants and contractors.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210728/613	To seek approval for strategic land acquisitions in Sunnyside, Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210729/614	To seek approval for the Lease of Land at Azure Court, Doxford Park.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210803/618	To seek approval for the Lease of Space in the Sunderland Software Centre to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210804/619	To seek approval of the Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy 2021-26.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210805/620	To consider proposed changes to the Procurement Procedure Rules and financial thresholds, with a recommendation to Council for formal approval if agreed	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210805/621	To consider potential financing proposals from a regional body	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210805/622	To seek approval to introduce Private Sector Leasing Models	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210805/623	To seek approval for a variation to extend the HWRC Service Contract at Beach Street	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210805/624	To seek approval to negotiate and enter into a contract with MCC Homes in the delivery of 16 one bed bungalows at Hudson Road	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210805/625	To seek approval for the Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210805/626	To seek approval to acquire land from and negotiate to enter into a build contract with MCC Homes Limited in the delivery of 11 one bed bungalows and 5 three bed houses at Old Mill Road.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210805/627	To seek approval to acquire land from and negotiate to enter into a build contract with Fit Out Yorkshire in the delivery of 13 one bed apartments at St James William Street.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210805/628	To seek approval to enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Sunderland Culture Ltd, the University of Sunderland, and the Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture Trust	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210810/629	In respect of the Licensing Act 2003, to review the Cumulative Impact Assessment.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210810/629	To seek approval in principle to the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order over land at Washington Road, Sunderland, and to authorise the necessary land acquisitions by private treaty and the proposed next steps.	Cabinet	Yes	14 September 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210810/630	To appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which the Council must consult as it performs certain specified functions under Part 4 of 2021 Domestic Abuse Act.	Cabinet	Y	14 September 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210510/590	Subject to the receipt of external funding, to approve funding and partnership arrangements to enable support of advanced manufacturing innovation and growth.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 September to 31 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210729/615	To consider the draft International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) Interim Planning Policy Statement.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 September to 31 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210729/616	Subject to the outcome of a funding application to approve payment of a grant to support development of Social Enterprise and Co-operative businesses on a city-wide basis	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 September to 31 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210505/587	To approve the procurement of a Contractor for the Repair Works at Hendon Foreshore Barrier, Port of Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210607/608	To seek approval to proposed funding arrangements with Siglion Investments LLP.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210623/610	In respect of the Gambling Act 2005, to review of Statement of Principles.	Cabinet	Y	16 November 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210729/617	To approve the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) Interim Planning Policy Statement for adoption.	Cabinet	Y	9 February 2022	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Note; Some of the documents listed may not be available if they are subject to an exemption, prohibition or restriction on disclosure. Further documents relevant to the matters to be decided can be submitted to the decision-maker. If you wish to request details of those documents (if any) as they become available, or to submit representations about a proposal to hold a meeting in private, you should contact Governance Services at the address below.

Subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of documents submitted to the decision-maker can also be obtained from the Governance Services team PO Box 100, Civic Centre, Sunderland, or by email to committees@sunderland.gov.uk

***Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker and requests for details of these documents should be submitted to Governance Services at the address given above.**

Who will decide;

Councillor Graeme Miller – Leader; Councillor Claire Rowntree – Deputy Leader; Councillor Paul Stewart - Cabinet Secretary; Councillor Louise Farthing – Children, Learning and Skills; Councillor Kelly Chequer – Healthy City; Councillor Linda Williams – Vibrant City; Councillor Kevin Johnston – Dynamic City.

This is the membership of Cabinet as at the date of this notice. Any changes will be specified on a supplementary notice.

Elaine Waugh,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance

16 August 2021